



TITHE AN OIREACHTAIS

**AN COMHCHOISTE UM THURASÓIREACHT, CULTÚR, EALAÍONA, SPÓRT
AGUS MEÁIN**

Tuarascáil Taistil: Ceannoifig RTÉ

16 Samhain 2022

HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS

JOINT COMMITTEE ON

TOURISM, CULTURE, ARTS, SPORT AND MEDIA

Travel Report: RTÉ Head Office

16 November 2022

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Joint Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media undertook a travel episode to the Head Office of Raidió Teilifís Éireann on 16th November 2022.

Members in attendance

- Deputy Niamh Smyth (*Cathaoirleach*)
- Senator Malcolm Byrne
- Senator Fintan Warfield

Secretariat in attendance

- Laura Pathe, Clerk to the Joint Committee
- Calum Fabb, Policy Advisor to the Joint Committee

Members of the Joint Committee were welcomed by RTÉ Director-General Dee Forbes, Head of Public Affairs Vivienne Flood, and Director of Technology Richard Waghorn. Members then toured the RTÉ television and radio studios, received an overview of RTÉ news and current affairs services, were briefed on RTÉ's deliberations in respect of public service media distribution and prominence, and met with senior editorial leads to discuss RTÉ's upcoming programming.

In addition, Members met Adrian Lynch (Director of Audience, Channels, and Marketing), Bernard Coen (Head of RTÉ Distribution and Marketing), Jim Jennings (Director of Content), Declan McBennett (Group Head of Sport), Peter Woods (Head of RTÉ Radio 1), Deirdre McCarthy (then Acting Director of RTÉ News), Paul Maguire (Acting Head of Current Affairs and Investigations Unit), and Rory Coveney (Director of Strategy).

STUDIO TOUR OF RTÉ

Members received a guided tour of RTÉ's radio and television studios from Richard Waghorn, RTÉ Director of Technology. Director-General Dee Forbes and Vivienne Flood, Head of Public Affairs, accompanied the Members on their tour.

RTÉ briefed the Committee in relation to studio infrastructure, graphic design, the use of augmented reality in studios, and the editorial staffing complement. Members discussed the impact of COVID-19 on programming and production and audience engagement. RTÉ also highlighted ongoing changes in its production model, such as the incorporation of linear, digital, and social media. RTÉ noted its partnerships with independent producers and its commissioning practices.

Members visited RTÉ's various playout suites and were informed in relation to RTÉ's file-based content management, off-air monitoring of channels and programming, and live continuity practices.

Members discussed youth audience engagement with RTÉ, noting RTÉ's previous initiatives in this domain such as the Home School Hub, as well as RTÉ's plans in relation to youth engagement and the need to balance children's needs.

Members also toured RTÉ's data centre infrastructure.

RTÉ NEWS AND CURRENT AFFAIRS

Members received an overview of RTÉ's News and Current Affairs from Deirdre McCarthy, RTÉ Acting Director of News and Current Affairs. Members also met Paul Maguire, as RTÉ Acting Head of Current Affairs and Investigations Unit.

Members toured RTÉ's newsrooms, including two newly-built studios that were designed for visual radio. RTÉ noted its intent to move away from specific programming models toward a broader sense of the "user experience".

Members discussed the shift of news content toward digital platforms and formats, RTÉ's digital-first policy, and the state of misinformation and disinformation.

Members and RTÉ also spoke in relation to the role of the Irish language in news

and current affairs outputs, and particularly Nuacht programming, staffing, automation and social media, and the acquisition of journalistic expertise.

Members were briefed on RTÉ's other current affairs outputs, such as *RTÉ Investigates* and its policy, legislative, and social impact, audience participation in current affairs, journalism policy and standards, climate change coverage, media literacy, and editorial processes.

DISTRIBUTION AND PROMINENCE OF PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA

Members were briefed on RTÉ's deliberations in relation to the distribution and prominence of public service media. Adrian Lynch, as RTÉ Director of Audiences, Channels and Marketing, and Bernard Coen, as RTÉ Head of Distribution and Strategic Partnerships, presented to the Committee.

RTÉ briefed the Committee on its negotiations with various platforms to ensure that content is prominent and well-distributed. RTÉ noted its market predictions such as a greater shift toward streaming platforms, decreased barriers to new market entrants, decreased opportunities for traditional paid TV, and increased opportunities resulting from internet-based platforms.

Members were also informed on the potential impacts of the Online Safety and Media Regulation Bill 2022 in relation to public service media prominence and distribution, as well as of new platform developments such as Sky Glass. RTÉ discussed co-development in relation to features such as the RTÉ player, prominence and discoverability, optimisation for algorithms, and the position of new market entrants and user interfaces.

RTÉ'S UPCOMING PROGRAMMING

Members received an update on RTÉ's upcoming programming across the late 2022 and early 2023 period. Jim Jennings, as RTÉ Director of Content, Declan McBennett, as RTÉ Group Head of Sport, and Peter Woods, as Head of RTÉ Radio One, presented to the Committee.

RTÉ displayed a reel of new content for Members, and discussed matters relating to funding models for drama, the Section 481 Film Tax Credit, partnerships with the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland and Screen Ireland, and the Regional Film Development Uplift.

Members also discussed a potential content levy, genre exports, investment in sport, broadcasting of women in sport, skills shortages and financial limitations in relation to sports broadcasting, and partnerships with clubs, National Governing Bodies, and the League of Ireland.

CONCLUDING MATTERS

The Cathaoirleach to the Committee, alongside the attending Members, thanked Director-General Dee Forbes and the RTÉ staff in attendance for the invitation to the RTÉ Head Office and for the presentations that they had made to the Committee.